

6- Something to Be Thankful For!
Pastor Joe – GFC – 11/20/22

This is the last week of our study in the Jude called Contending For the Faith. Next week we will begin our Christmas series called Rediscovering Christmas. Since this is the last week on Jude, I want to give a recap.

Jude, the brother of Jesus, wrote his letter to bless us and to warn us. He said in verse 3:

I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.

We've preached on what contending means, on the character and characteristics of false teachers who tried to lead believers astray. Jude 4 says:

They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.

We are facing these same false teachings today! So we need to know how to contend for that faith – the truths of the Bible – that were once for all delivered to the saints.

Jude gives us 10 Strategies for Contending for the Faith.

1- Jude taught us the first step in contending for the faith in verses 5-16. And that step is to beware of false teachers. He showed us their errors so we can recognize them when we see them.

Then, Jude gives us 9 more strategies for contending for the faith.

2- Remember the Word of God in order to overcome with the Word!

3- Build your Faith

When we become believers in Christ, we have a measure of faith. But that faith should grow and you are responsible to build your faith.

4- Pray in the Spirit

When we pray in the spirit it builds our faith because we have the confidence that the Holy Spirit is praying the perfect will of God through us.

5- Keep Yourself in God's Love

Jude is not saying to keep God loving you. He loves you no matter what. But we need to keep ourselves in the awareness of God's love!

6- Wait for God's Mercy

This phrase wait for the mercy of God is a traditional way of saying, "Wait for the

return of Jesus Christ.” We build our faith – not by focusing on how bad things, but by believing in and looking forward to the second coming of Jesus Christ.

- 7- Show Mercy to Doubters
- 8- Share Your Faith with the Lost
- 9- Hate the Sin but Love the Sinner

Today we look at the 10th and last strategy for contending for the faith in a sermon called Something to be Thankful For! We timed it to end this series on Thanksgiving week with this sermon. The last strategy is this: Thanksgiving and praise are spiritual weapons that we need as we contend for the faith.

In verses 24-25, Jude ends his letter with an incredible doxology, or hymn of praise. Some call this a benediction, but a benediction is a declaration of blessing. This is a doxology – a declaration of thanksgiving and praise.

The word doxology comes from 2 Greek words: doxa, meaning glory, and logos, meaning word, or speaking. So a doxology is words of praise to God about God.

Jude began his letter with prayer and he closes his letter with praise! These are the most commonly known verses from Jude.

To Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy— to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

In this passage Jude gives us 8 reasons for Thanksgiving.

1- We give God thanks because He is able to keep us from falling.

Jude’s message of warning and doom could have depressed and discouraged his readers. It’s easy to think that with so much false teaching and immorality around, very few Christians would ever reach heaven. But Jude reminds us that the answer lies only in the power of God. He is able to keep you, and you aren’t able to keep yourself.

Falling can mean to be defeated by any problem or difficulty, or by giving in to sin. But here it focuses on a person losing faith and ceasing to be a follower of Christ, together with the consequences of receiving judgment. This only happens if Jude's readers rely on their own strength in dealing with the godless. But in the end it is God who will give them victory over these people and their false teachings.

Jude is saying that God has the ability to keep us from falling into the deception and sin that the false teachers had fallen into. As Psalm 121:3 says: *He will not allow your foot to slip.*

In mountain climbing, the beginning hiker attaches himself to the expert so that if he loses his footing or slips, he won't fall to his death. In the same manner, if we keep connected with God, we might slip, but we will not fall.

By comparing passages of Scripture, we can find out who is really responsible for our safe keeping. Jude began the letter by addressing those who are kept by Jesus. Then he exhorted Christians to avoid false teachers and to keep themselves in the love of God.

Here at the end he concludes that it is ultimately God who keeps us from falling. Paul put the same idea in Philippians 2:12-13:

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

Keeping us spiritually safe is God's work. But you can always tell the people He is working in, because they are working also. God doesn't call us to passively let the Christian life happen to us. He calls us to a partnership with Him. We must work out into our lives what He works in us.

Not only is God able to keep us from falling, He is also able to present us before His glorious presence with something and without something.

To Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy.

2- We give God thanks because He is able to present us without fault.

Jude is referring to the Old Testament sacrificial system where people were required to sacrifice animals without spot or blemish. Notice that now – we do not present ourselves to God without fault – He presents us to Himself without fault!

This is important to understand because we get so focused on our sin and failures that we lose hope for ever being right with God. That's because we and God are looking at different things. We see our faults and failures, so how can God present us without fault? You are not faultless because of how great you are – but because of how great your Savior is!

If you lived in Old Testament days, going to the temple meant you had to take a sacrificial lamb with you that had to be killed to pay for your sins. You could have taken a bath and put on cologne and put on your best robe and sandals and fixed your hair and makeup and got a manicure and pedicure and everything else cured. You could have done all that and walked up to the priest dragging your lamb behind you. Do you know what the priest would have said to you? "Step aside."

Step aside?

“But wait! I got all cleaned up, dressed up and manicured and you want me to step aside? What about my new hairdo and my new clothes?”

The priest would have said – “I don’t care about any of that. None of that matters. Only one thing matters – the lamb. So step aside so I can examine the sacrifice – it must be without spot or blemish – not you.”

What matters is the sacrifice. And Jesus is our Lamb without spot or blemish. You can’t get yourself clean enough to approach God! So God took the initiative and sent His Son to shed His blood so that God could forgive us and clean us up! That one sacrifice is sufficient for every sin ever committed by everyone.

1 John 1:7 says:

The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

How much sin? All sin!

There is no sin that the blood of Christ cannot cover.

There is no wrong that the blood of Christ cannot forgive.

There is no crime or guilt that the blood of Jesus cannot remove.

The blood of Jesus has the power to forgive and cleanse from all sin!

His sacrifice was enough; we can’t add to it!

So we need to get our eyes off ourselves and onto the spotless Lamb of God who is worthy to pay the price for our sins. We are accepted because the sacrifice of Jesus was accepted by God! 1 Peter 1:18-19 says:

For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

Through the blood of Jesus our sins are forgiven – but more than that – we are justified and made righteous. If we only received forgiveness, then we would only then be morally neutral before God. But God goes beyond forgiveness – He justifies us and makes us righteous - totally right with God – totally without fault. It’s not our righteousness – it the righteousness of Christ that has been imputed – or credited to us!

I used to hear this all the time growing up: “Justified means just-as-I’d never sinned! That’s something to be thankful for!

3- We give God thanks because not only does He present us without fault, but He gives us great joy.

We don’t enter God’s presence by slinking in with shame. We enter God’s presence boldly because of the new and living way Jesus opened for us by His blood! Hebrews 10:19-22 says:

Since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, His body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith...

This is cause for great joy! God is able to keep us from falling and to present us without fault! Joy is a result of being pronounced not guilty! Joy is a result of being free from condemnation! Romans 8:1 says: *There is therefore now no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus.*

Those are things to be thankful for and they are reasons for great joy.

To Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

To the only God. There are not many Gods, there is one God. And He has no equals, rivals, or peers!

We usually think of Jesus as our Savior, but Jude calls God our Savior. The title "Savior" is used eight times in the New Testament to refer to God, but 16 times it is used of Jesus Christ. But Jude 25 shows us that God is our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord.

To the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord...

Jude is not saying that we can or should give these things to God. We cannot give God power, authority, or glory. All those things describe who God is. But when we acknowledge and declare the truth about God, it glorifies Him. We aren't giving God more majesty or power than He had before; we are just recognizing and declaring it. Let's examine these words:

4- We give God thanks because of His glory

Glory refers to God's being and presence. It is the outshining of His character and attributes.

5- We give God thanks because of His majesty

Majesty describes the awesome splendor and magnificence of God.

6- We give God thanks because of His power

Power refers to God's omnipotence, His unlimited power.

7- We give God thanks because of His authority

Not only does God have power, He has the authority to use it as He sees fit in His omniscience, His unlimited knowledge and wisdom. Authority refers to God's absolute sovereignty as the ruler of all. These are all things to be thankful for. And here's the amazing thing:

To the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore!

Robertson's Word Pictures of the New Testament says this is "as complete a statement of eternity as can be made in human language."

8- We give God thanks because He is eternal

Before all ages means before time was created. Please understand that eternity is not time that goes on forever – it is totally outside of time. Time was something that God created for us. 1 Corinthians 2:7-8 says:

No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began.

Time had a beginning and before time began God was the one and only God who possessed all glory, majesty, power and authority. Then Jude said that now God is the one and only God who possesses all glory, majesty, power and authority. Then Jude said that forever in the future God will be the one and only God who possesses all glory, majesty, power and authority. Our victory, our triumph in God through Jesus, is forever!!

There is serious deception in the world - even among those called Christians. There are enemies of the gospel who have infiltrated the church. Yet despite the greatness of the threat, God is greater still. He wins, and if we stay with Him, we are guaranteed victory also.

Four times in the New Testament, praise is given to the God who is able! Three are part of a doxology and as I studied them, I saw they show God's ability at work through our entire Christian life!

First – our salvation is possible because of God's ability. Hebrews 7:25 says:

Jesus is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them.

God is able to save us and He is also able to get us established in the Christian life.

Romans 16:25 says: *Now to Him who is able to establish you.*

Establish has three meanings – to set you on a certain course, to make you stable, and to strengthen you. God is able to get you off the wrong road and on the right road. And He is able to strengthen you in your journey of faith. In fact, the Amplified Version says: *Now to Him Who is able to strengthen you in the faith.*

So, God is able to save you completely and then to strengthen your faith. God does that through His immeasurable power and ability. Ephesians 3:20-21 says:

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to His power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Then Jude takes us forward to the time when we stand before God in eternity:

To Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy.

1 Corinthians 1:8 says:

He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day when our Lord Jesus Christ returns.

I don't know about you, but to me that is something to be thankful for! One day, we will all stand in the holy, terrifying presence of God. Jude said that the ungodly will not be able to stand before Him. In fact, they will want to flee from His presence and try to escape destruction. But the wrath of God will be poured out on them.

The godly are not so! They will be presented by Jesus to God as faultless, sinless, totally righteous because their faith is not in themselves but in Christ alone!

So Jude closes his letter by saying Amen! Amen is a word we regularly use at the end of prayers and doxologies. But the meaning of amen is "so be it," or "may this come true," or "may this happen as you have said."

Jude is a book full of warning, but it closes with supreme confidence in God. Dangerous times should make us trust in a mighty God. Amen?
The gates of Hell will not prevail against the church of Jesus Christ!

In essence, Jude is saying at the end of his letter, "I have told you to keep yourselves in the love of God; I have warned you against deception and impurity. But do not think that you can do any of this in your own strength.

You must receive power from above. Amen?

So you must now focus on giving thanks, praise and worship to Him, who alone is able to keep you from stumbling, able to present you before the throne of His glory, pure and spotless with exceeding joy.

This is something to be thankful about!
This is something to praise about!
This is something to rejoice in!

God is able to save you!
God is able to make you strong!
God is able to keep you from falling!
God is able to make grace abound to you so you will have all you need!
God is able to heal you– able to set you free– able to provide and protect!
That's something to be thankful for!